

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 10877 171240Z
ACTION EUR-12

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COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-02 INR-10 INT-05
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SP-02 SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 PA-02 NRC-07
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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY PARIS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 10877

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH IN US
SUBJECT: MEA DENIES REPORT ON SOVIET OFFER TO ENRICH
URANIUM FOR INDIA

REF: A) NEW DELHI 10790 B) NEW DELHI 10839

1. THE JULY 15 "TIMES OF INDIA" CARRIES A BRIEF ITEM
REPORTING THAT THE GOI IS NOT AWARE OF ANY SOVIET
OFFER TO ENRICH URANIUM FOR INDIA AS REPORTED BY
SUBHASH CHAKRAVARTY (REF A). A SPOKESMAN OF
THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS REPORTEDLY TOLD
NEWSMEN JULY 14 THAT "WE HAVE NO SUCH INFORMATION
ABOUT ANY SUCH OFFER."

2. DESPITE THIS OFFICIAL DENIAL, THE JULY 15 "TIMES
OF INDIA" NEVERTHELESS CARRIES A LEAD EDITORIAL DESCRIBING
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THE ALLEGED SOVIET OFFER AS A "MOST FRIENDLY GESTURE"
WHICH " WILL BE WHOLLY WELCOME IN NEW DELHI."THE
EDITORIAL NOTES THAT THIS OFFER MAY NOT BE
NECESSARY IN THE NEAR FUTURE SINCE THE 7.6 TON
ENRICHED FUEL SHIPMENT IS ABOUT TO BE DISPATCHED AND
THE SECOND SHIPMENT OF 16.7 TONS HAS A CHANCE OF
BEING DELIVERED. IN ADDITION, OPPOSITION WITHIN THE

US AND IN WESTERN EUROPE TO THE 1977 NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION ACT IS SUCH THAT IT COULD BE AMENDED. HOWEVER, THE EDITORIAL ADDS THAT EVEN IF THE ACT IS AMENDED, ANY RELAXED RESTRICTIONS WOULD LIKELY APPLY TO WESTERN EUROPE RATHER THAN TO INDIA. IN THIS SENSE, THE ALLEGED SOVIET OFFER TO ENRICH URANIUM "MAY PROVE INVALUABLE TO TIDE OVER THE INTERREGNUM" UNTIL INDIGENOUS PROCESSES ARE PERFECTED. THE "TIMES" ALSO NOTES THAT IF SOVIET HELP IS REQUIRED IN OPERATING TARAPUR, MOSCOW WILL PROBABLY INSIST ON IAEA SAFEGUARDS FOR THE PLANT. BUT THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THIS WOULD POSE NO NEW PROBLEMS, SINCE TARAPUR IS ALREADY UNDER SUCH SAFEGUARDS.

3. THE JULY 15 PRO-CPI, PRO-MOSCOW "PATRIOT" CARRIES A TYPICALLY UNFRIENDLY EDITORIAL OBSERVING THAT THE US IS USING A CARROT AND STICK APPROACH TO SUPPLYING FUEL TO TARAPUR. IT ALSO BLAMES THE GOI LEADERSHIP FOR UNILATERALLY RENOUNCING INDIA'S OPTION TO ENGAGE IN PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS.

4. SEVERAL PAPERS JULY 16 CARRY A UNI WIRE SERVICE STORY WHICH SPECULATES ON THREE POSSIBLE OPTIONS OPEN TO INDIA IF THE US FAILS TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING ENRICHED FUEL FOR TARAPUR: (1) SEEK SOVIET HELP IN ENRICHING INDIA'S NATURAL URANIUM IN SOVIET ENRICHMENT UNCLASSIFIED

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PLANTS. (2) SET UP A PILOT ENRICHMENT PLANT IN INDIA. (3) ENGAGE IN WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CALLED "IMPROVISATION." UNDER THIS THIRD OPTION, THE REPORT STATES, SPENT FUEL CAN BE RECYCLED THROUGH THE "SPECTRAL SHIFT" TECHNIQUE AND A PLUTONIUM OXIDE/URANIUM OXIDE MIX CAN PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL FOR THE TARAPUR PLANT. THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT INDIA HAS THE TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THIS THIRD OPTION IN THREE OR FOUR YEARS. GOHEEN

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